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President: Mr. Lauber (Vice-President) ..... (Switzerland)

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In the absence of Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea), Mr. Lauber (Switzerland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 9: Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (E/2016/60)

Panel discussion: "Moving beyond business as usual: Working together to reduce need, risk and vulnerability"

1. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), moderator, said that the international community must act quickly to turn into action over 500 commitments for change made at the World Humanitarian Summit one month earlier. In order to implement such commitments as reducing risk, thereby reducing the need for assistance; reinforcing, not replacing, local and national response capacity; and transcending the humanitarian-development divide, a new way of working and of financing was required. However, the capacity for upholding humanitarian principles could not be compromised.

2. The United Nations had been the first to recognize that business as usual was no longer an option. The Commitment to Action on transcending humanitarian-development divides signed at the World Humanitarian Summit by eight United Nations agencies and endorsed by the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration showed the willingness of all involved to work towards collective outcomes based on comparative advantage over multi-year time frames. Other international initiatives of interest included the OECD International Network on Conflict and Fragility, which was committed to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus through financial and political support, and the World Bank's intention to establish a global crisis response platform to support countries facing exogenous shocks. Discussions should also continue on better alignment of short and longer-term funding through an international financing platform, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

3. In order to overcome the silos that had divided humanitarian and development work for far too long, the international community must look beyond short-term, sector-based projects and work towards collective outcomes to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also had to work over multi-year time frames, considering how and when to harmonize planning, coordination and financing and the types of leadership and accountability required to deliver the desired results, on the basis of comparative advantage demonstrated in context rather than in terms of institutional mandates. To that end, greater and more predictable participation of the private sector, local responders and authorities and civil society was required. While the provision of life-saving assistance was an aspect of humanitarian action that must be protected, the international community must push itself to achieve more in situations where closer collaboration to achieve common objectives and results was necessary.

4. The global political commitment to change and the momentum being built through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement must be used to the greatest advantage possible. A change in focus would not only deliver better results for people affected by crisis but also broaden development gains to help the millions of people furthest behind in charting their own course out of aid dependency.

5. Launching the panel discussion, he asked how humanitarian and development efforts could be better connected to achieve collective outcomes that reflected the 2030 Agenda's principles and which actors should be involved.

6. **Dr. Nabarro** (Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), panellist, said that, although the 2030 Agenda was a focus of his work, actions were also aimed at implementing the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement, instruments of crucial importance. Never before had all 193 United Nations Member States agreed on a plan for the future of the world and its people that brought together such a broad ranges of issues, grouped around the principles of universality, indivisibility, ensuring that no one was left behind, integrated responses across all areas, and partnership.

7. In implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, it was important to ensure that humanitarian action was undertaken in accordance with relevant

principles and laws and integrated into work on development, peace and security and human rights in an indivisible manner. To that end, it would be necessary to think, work, organize, communicate and report in new ways, reflecting the best practices in humanitarian and development responses everywhere. Dignity, impartiality and respect for people and their rights were central to ensure that no one was left behind.

8. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), asked what needed to be truly 'new' about the new way of working to make a difference in people's lives and to empower people to reduce their own needs and vulnerabilities.

9. **Ms. Patel** (Interim Executive Director, Network for Empowered Aid Response). panellist, said that the Network had been born out of the desire of local and national non-governmental organizations for a more equitable and dignified humanitarian response, and of the need to ensure that people, communities and local and national capacities were at the centre of humanitarian response efforts. In the new way of working, the huge amount of existing capacity must be recognized, equitable partnerships must be promoted, and local and national organizations and actors must be given the support they required to meet the needs of their communities. The provision of sufficient high-quality resources as directly as possible was key, as was a shift to demand-driven resource allocation. Adequate human resources capacity was essential, including for designing programmes that put communities at the centre of decision-making processes at the regional and international levels. Monitoring the implementation of commitments undertaken as part of the World Humanitarian Summit process was important, and progress made should be reported in a transparent manner.

10. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked how concerns about diluting the sense of transparency and accountability associated with the development of an 'ecosystem' could be addressed.

11. **Ms. Patel** (Interim Executive Director, Network for Empowered Aid Response) said that accountability mechanisms were already in place as a result of the actions delivered and partnerships developed by local and national actors. A multi-stakeholder approach was required to extend the existing accountability mechanisms and ensure that implementation of commitments was monitored not only at the global level but also at the national level. Communities themselves could also have an input. While it was important to provide for accountability, other innovative mechanisms, such as national pooled funds, were required to enable local and national actors to reach communities as directly as possible. A common approach with respect to development and humanitarian action was essential; local actors did not tend to distinguish between the two areas in dealing with the situations they faced.

12. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked how local networks and capacity could be better utilized in analysis, planning, programming and financing for better humanitarian and development outcomes.

13. **Ms. Mahmood** (Under-Secretary-General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), panellist, said that local action was embedded in the DNA of the International Federation, whose 165,000 local branches provided the front-line response before, during and after a crisis. The International Federation already recognized that action should be as local as possible and as international as necessary but acknowledged the need, more broadly, for a shift in mindset to allow local organizations, which had an understanding of local context, culture and situations, to lead, and international organizations to play a supporting role. However, local action should be viewed as a means, not an end. While the need for fast, effective, efficient and principled humanitarian response could sometimes be met by local action, international support might also be required.

14. Capacity did not always translate into capability; good programme and financial management, reporting, accountability and governance also had to be developed. Investment funds for national societies as well as capacity-building funds were required. Effective local organizations, which were essential for effective humanitarian action, should not be viewed as implementing partners.

15. The International Federation had been working with governments in 50 countries to look at legal

preparedness, and 24 countries had adopted legal frameworks that allowed their governments to play a leading role and gave national Red Cross societies a prominent role in the event of international operations. Trust was essential to turn relationships with local networks and organizations into a virtuous circle.

16. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked how people-centred initiatives such as the One Billion Coalition for Resilience launched at the World Humanitarian Summit to strengthen the safety, health and well-being of vulnerable populations everywhere would change the way of working in the future.

17. **Ms. Mahmood** (Under-Secretary-General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the One Billion Coalition for Resilience sought to enable existing mechanisms and initiatives in the area of building resilience to come together and commit to transforming the state of resilience in the world. Noting the importance of leveraging technology, she said that the approach was based on digital ecosystem, advocacy, business continuity, civil society and operational platforms, and had been developed for real, practical, predictable change and action to enable one billion people to build their own threat-specific resilience.

18. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked what changes were required in order to implement the new way of working enshrined in the Commitment to Action.

19. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme), panellist, said that the new way of working would require not only changes in action, but also changes in mindset. Collective action was the only way for people's inherent resilience and capacities to be used to overcome risks and vulnerabilities, particularly among those who were furthest behind — the 800 million people enduring hunger and the one in four children suffering preventable, but irreversible, chronic malnutrition. Business as usual was insufficient to build resilience. The shift from responding to risk to managing risk required collective action and should include engaging those affected, building capacities and relying on the existing capacities of national first responders.

20. Humanitarian action must be viewed in a longer-term perspective and more effectively embedded within activities to reduce need and vulnerabilities over multi-year time frames, while allowing for the provision of short-term life-saving assistance when needed. Humanitarian relief should protect hard-won development gains, while development assistance should focus on action to avoid a humanitarian crisis in the event of a shock. The overriding consideration should be delivery — not the organization or agency providing the assistance.

21. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), noting the concerns that humanitarian action could be subsumed by a broader development agenda and might not pay due heed to fundamental humanitarian principles, asked how such concerns could be addressed.

22. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that, in many contexts, humanitarian and development actors were one and the same. They recognized the mutual benefits of working towards collective outcomes, such as the 2030 Agenda, and of reaching those furthest behind first. Fragmentation could be avoided by more coherent analysis and assessment. Humanitarian principles, to which development actors were also committed, must remain paramount. Closer cooperation could be consistent with humanitarian principles, but not in all cases. The role of governments and other national actors needed to be considered, particularly in situations of extreme conflict or impeded access, which were not the norm.

23. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked how a shift in the programming of non-governmental organizations towards measurable, evidence-based interventions would fit in with the wider agenda of collective outcomes.

24. **Ms. Ash** (Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, International Rescue Committee), panellist, said that the Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved without focusing on the challenges of displaced populations, since neglect of those populations could erode development gains. The challenge for the humanitarian community was to give such people a voice. While the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit and the new way of working set

out in the Commitment to Action were encouraging, much remained to be done to define the desired outcomes with respect to displaced populations. It was essential to establish a process for the development of measurable, collective outcomes, which would facilitate the organization of joint assessments and planning, and common reporting and accountability frameworks.

25. The International Rescue Committee had worked over two years to define outcomes in the priority areas of health, education, safety, economic well-being and empowerment. It had used the limited evidence available to identify the most effective and efficient interventions to achieve outcomes based on the unique vulnerabilities, risks and circumstances of the populations to be assisted. Its findings were available to the international community in an Outcomes and Evidence Framework. The work had revealed a considerable gap between research and evidence in the development and humanitarian context, and the International Rescue Committee was undertaking a number of evaluations to redress the balance.

26. If the international community was to achieve its objectives, it should to focus on desired outcomes, rely on the best evidence, use the most cost-efficient and cost-effective methods, welcome other partners, and use and improve existing tools and resources.

27. **Dr. Nabarro** (Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) agreed that it was vital to have a framework of collective outcomes. If the international community succeeded in changing its mindset and language, it would be able to change the way it worked. It was preferable to talk about 'ecosystems' rather than 'organizations' because responsibility for humanitarian action was often shared by a wide variety of actors and entities, and did not fall to a specific organization. The term 'principles' should be used instead of 'projects' since a project mentality could sometimes undermine principled working in ecosystems. It was important to recognize the subjective nature of knowledge and the need to harness the know-how of different local actors, particularly women. The international community should see itself as working in one collective movement comprising networks of people, rather than employees or staff.

28. **Mr. O'Donnell** (World Federation for Mental Health) asked if there were any core resources to assist in trust building, which was listed as one of the 17 United Nations core values and competencies.

29. **Ms. Mahmood** (Under-Secretary-General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that, in her experience, the best way of building trust was to work together and build relationships at the personal, professional and organizational level.

30. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) added that joint needs assessments were also conducive to trust building. He asked how local actors could be better funded directly and what viable mechanisms existed to support localization. Country-based pooled funds, which were one of the best ways of ensuring a focus on a specific context, might be utilized more.

31. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that of greater importance than whether funding was direct or indirect, was the need for funding to be reliable, assured and multi-year so that local actors had the capacity to deliver before, during and after a crisis.

32. **Ms. Patel** (Interim Executive Director, Network for Empowered Aid Response) said that in some cases, local actors were implementing large programmes without direct access to funding. Some donors lacked the capacity to manage a large number of organizations, and the creation at the national level of a pooled fund for local and national organizations, together with good governance, could provide a mechanism for direct funding.

33. **Ms. Mahmood** (Under-Secretary-General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the Federation raised funds for the national society leading the response. The quality of the partnership and the power dynamics between donors were issues for consideration, as was the question of whether donors were actually willing to take a risk in funding local organizations.

34. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked what were the most important initial practical steps required to encourage humanitarian and private sector development actors, local organizations and other partners to work together.

35. **Ms. Ash** (Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, International Rescue Committee) said that, as an initial practical step, the international community should establish a formal process for identifying time-bound, measurable collective outcomes. Other practical steps included relying on existing evidence and generating such evidence if necessary, establishing a standard to assess the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of interventions, and reporting on that standard in a common and transparent manner. Once those elements had been established, discussions on who had the comparative advantage to lead in achieving a particular outcome could begin. Such an approach was people-centred rather than mandate-centred; it would facilitate collaborative action among multiple stakeholders with different skill sets and ensure that interventions with the greatest value for money and impact among local populations were undertaken.

36. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked how policy recommendations with a family perspective could help to tackle the humanitarian crisis through a holistic approach towards moving beyond business as usual.

37. **Ms. Patel** (Interim Executive Director, Network for Empowered Aid Response) said that a holistic approach, incorporating a family perspective, would help communities to thrive, not just survive. Local organizations advocated such an approach but because of insufficient resource allocation were sometimes forced to pick and choose among areas of intervention, which could create conflict in the community.

38. **Ms. Ash** (Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, International Rescue Committee) agreed that a holistic approach was required if an individual was to thrive. In its Outcomes and Evidence Framework, the International Rescue Committee had sought to identify a range of integrated interventions whose implementation by actors with comparative advantage would help to achieve agreed outcomes.

39. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that a joint assessment of families' needs and efforts to place the family perspective at the centre would facilitate action on the humanitarian-development nexus.

40. **Mr. Seleka** (South Africa) emphasized that dignity and respect had to be placed at the centre of efforts in order to meet people's needs and aspirations.

41. **Ms. Oliveira Sobota** (Brazil) said that, while more coherent interaction between the development and humanitarian dimensions was welcome, further discussion was required on how to translate ideas into operational activities. Breaking down the silos could mean different things to different people. Her delegation was seeking to assess the impact of proposals on the humanitarian and development areas, including with respect to neutrality and the need to protect funding and give priority to non-emergency contexts. The first core responsibility identified in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity, was global leadership to prevent and end conflict; while the need to build resilience and development should be seen as a goal in itself, it was important not to overlook the political responsibility of those who could stop conflict and the flow of weapons and ensure respect for international law.

42. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked at what point in a protracted crisis did development become the primary goal.

43. **Ms. Mahmood** (Under-Secretary-General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the primary goal of any intervention had to be saving lives, including through the provision of immediate aid. Recovery and future development could be addressed as part of a long-term view.

44. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that life-saving immediate aid should be delivered in such a way as to achieve the primary goal of building resilience, removing risk and reducing vulnerability in affected populations.

45. **Ms. Patel** (Interim Executive Director, Network for Empowered Aid Response) said that responses should be tailored to needs in a particular context and geographical situation.

46. **Ms. Ash** (Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, International Rescue Committee) agreed that action to help people survive, thrive and regain control of their lives should be context-specific.

47. **Ms. Clements** (Deputy High Commissioner, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR)) said that agencies would have to make a number of internal shifts in order to embrace the new way of working. UNHCR, for its part, was seeking to establish a longer-term planning approach to align more closely with development agencies; it was also expanding its engagement with governments. UNHCR recognized that, while speed of response was important, measures had to be in place to deal with protracted displacements spanning decades, and was changing its orientation accordingly. It was also building capacity to understand how the new ecosystem worked. Similar shifts in development partners would yield better collective outcomes.

48. **Ms. Patel** (Interim Executive Director, Network for Empowered Aid Response) said that working with partners in a contractual relationship was very different to working in an equitable relationship, and attitudes must shift accordingly. If a partnership was to be equitable and an enabling environment created, there had to be mutual accountability and equity of power. While quality of funding was more important than quantity, sufficient investment in local and national organizations to ensure provision of a sustainable response and prevent a capacity drain towards international non-governmental organizations was needed. If people, dignity and respect were to be placed at the centre of efforts, organizations should be accountable not only to donors, but also to the community.

49. **Ms. Mahmood** (Under-Secretary-General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the good progress already made by many organizations and institutions should be acknowledged, as should the need to manage risks and create incentives to drive change. She highlighted the importance of trust, the humility to recognize areas where further progress was required, learning from people at the local level, and building on exemplary local leadership.

50. **Mr. Abdulla** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that the international community had to work together to reach the greatest number of people in the most effective manner possible. To that end, desired, collective, multi-year and context-specific outcomes should be planned at the country level and delivered collectively through comparative strengths at country level. If the new way of working was to be successful, changes in mindset and attitude were required; stakeholders should be the change that they wished to see in the world.

51. **Ms. Ash** (Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, International Rescue Committee), said that with some 60 million displaced persons worldwide in an extreme state of vulnerability and hardship, there was a need for urgent action. The development of a time-bound and specific process for establishing measurable, collective outcomes and for implementing the Commitment to Action was essential.

52. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) welcomed the shared ambition and the consensus among all stakeholders on the need to deliver on the new way of working and put people in crisis at the centre, while respecting their needs and dignity. Issues of importance emerging from the discussion included the need to invest in national and local capacity and actors, assess whether progress was being made over time, build trust and report with transparency. Courage and a sense of vision would be required to shift mindsets and make the policy and pragmatic shifts necessary for humanitarian and development agencies and actors to work together to deliver on collective outcomes based on comparative advantage, and enable citizens to survive and thrive. The 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement provided an organizing framework and the World Humanitarian Summit acted as an accelerator to work together to deliver better at scale and more immediately to people in need. However, if the humanitarian-development nexus was to be established, humanitarian principles must be respected at all times.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.